

This week, House conservatives will fight to change the way we spend the people's money in the "People's House" as a debate over reforming the budget process comes to the floor of Congress.

Instead of willingly being party to the annual charade where Congress passes a tightfisted budget and repeatedly ignores it as excessive spending bills are passed, a courageous group of legislators have banded together to insist that the majority have the power to enforce the budget of the majority on the floor of the House.

Not that our leadership couldn't see this coming. House conservatives have tried again and again to bring these reforms with legislation on the floor and within the confines of the Republican caucus.

Last year, House conservatives brought the Family Budget Protection Act, authored by Rep. Paul Ryan(R-WI) and Rep. Jeb Hensarling(R-TX), to the floor of the Congress. It included a broad range of changes designed to make our federal budget more reflective of the discipline practiced by every successful family budget at every kitchen table in America.

Chief among the concepts advanced in this legislation was the simple notion that the federal budget should not grow at a more rapid rate than the family budget. Reformers also introduced the idea that members of the majority in Congress should have the power to enforce the budget of the majority.

Under the present Rules of Congress, if a spending bill exceeds the budget, any objection can be waived by the members of the Rules Committee. Under the Family Budget Protection Act, any objection on the House floor raised against bills with excessive spending could only be waived by a supermajority vote.

The Family Budget Protection Act was defeated on the floor of the House when even a majority of Republicans opposed these commonsense measures.

Since then, House conservatives have brought these reforms forward in the form of amendments to the various rules that govern the Republican caucus and the House of Representatives itself. Time after time, House conservatives saw these measures opposed by members of our own party in Congress.

Now comes the debate over adopting the federal budget and House conservatives have determined to make a stand for fiscal discipline and budget reform.

But that stand has not been without a thoughtful effort to accommodate the concerns of our peers.

Instead of over a dozen reform measures, House conservatives have asked for one reform known as point of order protection, the power to enforce the budget.

Instead of requiring that such objections to excessive spending only be overcome by a

supermajority, we have agreed to accept a simple majority vote.

Instead of requiring that these objections apply to all bills before Congress, House conservatives have agreed to only require such protection apply to spending bills that come before the House, perhaps as few as ten bills this year.

And so we begin our week with determination and hope. We are determined to stand for the kind of reform that will start us back down the road toward the fiscal discipline that the Republican Party has made its hallmark for a century and a half. We are hopeful that our conservative majority and our conservative leaders will see the wisdom of accepting this modest but important change in the way we spend the precious resources of the American people. Stay tuned.

Rep. Mike Pence
Columbus, Indiana
March 12, 2005